

Job Title: Postdoctoral Scholar [i.e. Postdoc-Employee]
Institution: University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Department: Psychology

The **Rational Altruism** Lab invites applications for a Postdoc-Employee position on developing computational models of moral decision-making in social dilemmas. The intended start date is **Fall 2026**. This role offers the opportunity to contribute to **extending resource-rational analysis to moral decision-making, develop computational methods for translating complex ethical theories into simple moral heuristics, and contribute to understanding how bounded minds can make good moral decisions**. This project is part of a larger, interdisciplinary project on moral decision-making conducted by the Wise Judgment Consortium (<https://wiseminds.uwaterloo.ca>), an international team of experts in decision-making, cross-cultural research, computational modeling, wisdom, morality, data science, psychometrics, as well as natural language processing and LLMs.

About the Lab and Department

The Rational Altruism Lab conducts rigorous, theory-driven research on decision-making, morality, and cooperation. We ask fundamental questions about rationality, altruism, and moral learning with the broader aim of strengthening the scientific foundations for improving societal decision-making for future generations. Our lab culture emphasizes professionalism, collaboration, and mutual support. We value clear goals with accountability, open and direct communication, continuous learning, and open-science practices. To learn more about the lab and our research, please visit our website: <https://ralab.psych.ucla.edu/>

The UCLA Department of Psychology is renowned for excellence in teaching, research, and its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is part of the Division of Life Sciences in the College of Letters and Science, serving a vibrant community of scholars and students.

Key Responsibilities:

- Execute a pre-defined research project on developing resource-rational models of (moral) decision-making in social dilemmas
- Develop, document, and maintain code of computational methods for deriving resource-rational strategies for human decision-making
- Scientific writing and academic publishing
- Evaluate alternative computational models against existing data sets
- Design, implement, and analyze behavioral experiments to test the models' predictions
- Collaborate with lab members and external collaborators
- Assist with mentoring and training undergraduate and graduate research assistants in computational modeling and experimental design
- Assist in lab management and administration

Minimum Qualifications:

- Ph.D. in Cognitive Science, Psychology, Computer Science, Philosophy, Economics, or a related field by the start date (Fall 2026)
- Strong research background in computational and mathematical modeling
- Strong programming skills
- Knowledge of probability theory and expected utility theory
- Prior experience with research on decision-making or related topics
- Track record in publishing scientific articles

Preferred Qualifications:

- Experience with computational methods for solving sequential decision problems, including reinforcement learning, (approximate) dynamic programming, and rational metareasoning

- Experience in resource-rational analysis
- Knowledge of research on social dilemmas or game theory
- Knowledge of cognitive psychology

Application Materials:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV) listing relevant skills and publications
- Statement of research interests and accomplishments, highlighting relevance to the position
- First-authored article on computational modeling and link to a public repository containing the project's codebase
- Contact information for 2-3 references, at least two of whom have supervised the applicant's research directly

Application Timeline:

Applications received by **November 10, 2025**, will receive full consideration. Later applications may be reviewed until the position is filled. Short-listed applicants will likely be interviewed in December 2025 and/or January 2026. Reference checks will be conducted in January/February 2026. The first offer will likely be extended in February or March 2026. We envision that the successful applicant will start the position in Fall 2026. The exact start date is flexible.

Position Details:

This is a full-time position with an initial two-year appointment, renewable annually thereafter, contingent upon performance and funding, commencing in September 2026 (exact start date is flexible). It offers a competitive salary and benefits package (see [Table 23](#) for the Postdoc Salary Scales for this position). The Rational Altruism Lab is committed to supporting postdoctoral scholars' career advancement through regular mentorship and professional development meetings. The position provides opportunities to publish in top-tier journals, earn co-authorships on publications led by other lab members, present at national and international conferences, contribute to grant proposals, supervise research assistants, and mentor junior researchers. In addition, the position provides opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and networking within the Wise Judgment Consortium (<https://wiseminds.uwaterloo.ca/>), an international network of researchers studying wise decision-making with methods from psychology, cross-cultural research, LLMs and natural language processing, as well as data science and computational modeling.

To Apply:

Interested applicants should fill out the application form and upload the required application materials by applying directly to the position: <https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF10650>.

About UCLA:

As a University employee, you will be required to comply with all applicable University policies and/or collective bargaining agreements, as may be amended from time to time. Federal, state, or local government directives may impose additional requirements.

The University of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected status under state or federal law.

As a condition of employment, the finalist will be required to disclose if they are subject to any final administrative or judicial decisions within the last seven years determining that they committed any misconduct, are currently being investigated for misconduct, left a position during an investigation for alleged misconduct, or have filed an appeal with a previous employer.

- “Misconduct” means any violation of the policies or laws governing conduct at the applicant’s previous place of employment, including, but not limited to, violations of policies or laws prohibiting sexual harassment, sexual assault, or other forms of harassment, discrimination, dishonesty, or unethical conduct, as defined by the employer.
- [UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [UC Anti-Discrimination Policy for Employees, Students and Third Parties](#)
- [APM - 035: Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination in Employment](#)